

## **TASK GROUP UPDATES**

### **Highways and Streetscene Contracts Task Group** (Chairman: Cllr Jeff Osborn)

The Task Group met on 25 November 2014, at which it received a detailed overview and presentation from Atkins representatives on their work in relation to the Wiltshire Highways Consultancy Contract (WHCC).

The Atkins Year 2 plan keeps the focus on working better together with both BBLP and Wiltshire Council. It builds on the first year by developing greater collaboration and interaction whilst looking at efficiencies. It was acknowledged that there had initially been an issue around the delivery process for Integrated Transport Scheme projects, and improvements should now be seen in this area

Atkins highlighted that historically there had been no records kept detailing drainage under highways. Surveys were now done ahead of all planned maintenance work and records kept. When resurfacing roads, time was spent ensuring that the drainage below the road surface was in working order. A routine gully cleanse was completed once a year, however the benefit from this would not be seen if the drainage pipe below was broken. The importance of this work was emphasised given it's relation to flood preparation.

The backlog in road maintenance was highlighted as a challenge, with government funding being insufficient. The Local Highways Investment Fund contributed to an investment of £21 million per year over 6 years to help address the backlog and a programme which balanced safety against preference had been developed in consultation with the area boards. Some Department of Transport funding was now being given directly to the Local Enterprise Partnership, meaning the Council had less control over how it could be spent, and where there was competition with other schemes that may not be road related. Clarity was sought over highway maintenance funding and it was agreed that members would receive a short paper addressing this. Concern was raised over the potential for reduction in the road maintenance budget, and it was noted that members face difficult budget setting decisions ahead.

The task group welcomed Atkins commitment to local recruitment and progression within the company and their involvement with schools and the Chamber of Commerce. Confirmation of their use of apprentices, with plans to increase numbers was applauded.

The task group make the following initial recommendations:

1. That both the Task Group and Environment Select Committee should be fully kept abreast of all budget reductions on both Highways contracts and the consequent implications for the service and the people of Wiltshire
2. That surveying and repairing drainage below the road surface should continue as a priority given its relationship with flood preparation.

3. That closer working is seen from Atkins with CATG and BBLP on Integrated Transport Scheme projects
4. That Atkins continue to build on their commitment to local recruitment and career progression, and their involvement with schools and the Chamber of Commerce

The Task Group welcomed the comprehensive overview of the Atkins contract.